

The Martyrs' Hymn – “We Rest On Thee”

The Martyrs' Hymn

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe;
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.



J. J. Sibelius
1865-1957

2 Chronicles 14:11

And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

FINLANDIA

Introduction – Leighton Ford, 1959

This writer's introduction to The Martyrs' Hymn really goes back to 1959, the year of the first Billy Graham Crusade in Sydney. In addition to the main meetings, members of the Billy Graham team preached in schools, including this writer's, visited by Leighton Ford. He spoke of some missionaries who “ended their lives face down in a river with spears in their backs.”

Jack and May Griffin

Another eight years passed before this writer got saved through the Australian Navigator ministry in 1967 but that ministry came about through the salvation at the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade of a then 47 year-old businessman named Jack Griffin, now with the Lord, and his wife May. This writer's salvation therefore goes back to that of Jack and May Griffin at the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade in Sydney and in turn to Jack and May's daughter Gloria, who prayed for her parents for 9 years, trusting in Luke 1:37 “**For with God nothing shall be impossible.**” It was through The Navigators that this writer learnt of the missionaries that Ford spoke of and The Martyrs' Hymn.

The Five Ecuadorian Martyrs

The Cyberhymnal site says of the hymn *We Rest On Thee* that “*This hymn¹ has a sad story associated with it. In January 1956, five missionaries sang it before entering the Ecuadorian jungle to bring the Gospel to the Auca Indians. They were Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Jim Elliott, Roger Yoderian, & Peter Fleming. After the men reached the Aucas, the Indians murdered them on the Curaray River. However, the story has a happy ending. Years later, contact with the Aucas was re-established, and many came to Christ, including the killers, which is how first hand details of the missionaries' deaths came to light.*”

Ever since then, the hymn *We Rest On Thee* has been associated with those five missionary martyrs and is, in this writer's view, rightly called The Martyrs' Hymn. This writer has always appreciated The Martyrs' Hymn because it has a worthy tune (many hymns don't in this writer's view) and its lyrics are soundly scriptural. That is easily shown, especially insofar as the line "*We rest on thee, and in Thy Name we go*" is taken from 2 Chronicles 14:11. Let's look at each clause.

"We rest on thee"

The expression "*We rest on thee*" brings to mind what the Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 11:28-29. **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."** The Lord Jesus Christ said that and nobody laughed², because his listeners saw that the Lord did **"speak forth the words of truth and soberness"** Acts 26:25 and even His enemies who heard Him reported that **"Never man spake like this man"** John 7:46. That was true because no man ever did, or has. Mohammed didn't, Marx didn't, Engels didn't, Einstein didn't, Darwin didn't and Dawkins wouldn't dare. Pope Leo XIII said that "*We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty*"³ but no pope ever said what Jesus Christ said about **"rest unto your souls."** Whatever their following, those others couldn't deliver **"rest unto your souls"** to their followers. The Lord Jesus Christ can, and does, according to Philippians 4:6-7, which should be memorised. **"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."**

"And in Thy name we go"

The second clause follows on from the first by means of the little word "***and***," which is right and proper because resting on the Lord Jesus Christ is not idleness or inactivity. It is a secure foundation for whatever God then wants you to do. The Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20 illustrates this principle. **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."** Note, when you see a "***therefore***" in scripture, look for what it is there for, the term "***alway***" means all the way and the important end word "***Amen***" means to "***say so too***" according to 1 Kings 1:36. The going, teaching, baptizing and observing in carrying out the Great Commission rests *therefore* wholly upon the Lord's assurance that **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."** His assurance is for "***alway***," all the way and it is underscored by the promised "***Amen***." That is no doubt how the five Ecuadorian martyrs applied the scripture in the hymn from 2 Chronicles 14:11 "***we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.***"

However, going "***in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ***" a phrase found 3 times in scripture, 1 Corinthians 5:4, Ephesians 5:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, is not solely for the big picture, like the Great Commission. It is for the entire Christian walk, as Paul shows right after his conversion in Acts 9:6. **"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."** Be sure you have Acts 9:6 whole (KJB), un-mutilated (NIV mutilates) and undisputed (NKJV disputes). It sums up resting, going and ministering "***in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***"

An Early Missionary "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

The missionary theme of The Martyrs' Hymn points to the next and last hymn in this series, about an early missionary, who definitely rested on and went in "***thy name***" as will be seen next time.

References

¹ www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/w/e/r/wereston.htm

² CD Gospel According to John, John 7:22-53 by Dr Peter S. Ruckman

³ www.chick.com/reading/tracts/0071/0071_01.asp Are Roman Catholics Christians?